

more, it allows theology to challenge both reductionist approaches that collapse reality into a single observable stratum and pluralist theories that affirm the existence of different strata but decline to see them as dependent on each other (226). McGrath closes this chapter with a short and, in my opinion, inadequate discussion of the theological implications of Bhaskar's work.

In the final chapter of *Reality*, McGrath explores the epistemological and rational contours of a scientific theology. He argues that a scientific theology 1) takes the form of a coherent response to an existing reality; 2) is an a posteriori discipline; 3) takes account of the unique character of its object; and 4) offers an explanation of reality (246). He also proposes that a scientific theology, by virtue of the inner logic of the Christian faith, has to be Christocentric. He concludes, "A scientific theology which is truly a *Christian* theology can be so only when it focuses on Christ, as it is in Christ that the fulness of the God who is known partially through the created order is to be encountered (Colossians 2:9)" (313).

Overall, *Reality* is superb. It is the most rigorous and intellectually satisfying defense of critical realism written by a theologian to date. Realism is the basic conviction of the Christian tradition. For instance, like Bhaskar, who has proposed that the stratification of reality determines the appropriate methodology of the different sciences, St. Thomas Aquinas argued that the division and methods of the sciences are differentiated by the nature of their objects (see *Commentary on the De Trinitate of Boethius*, QQ. V, VI). It is refreshing to see this realism affirmed and employed by contemporary philosophers and theologians.

Finally, *Reality* is striking because McGrath's methodology is able to acknowledge the failings of classical foundationalism without itself falling into a relativism that is content with a coherentist account of truth. McGrath is successful because he emphasizes the role that reality must play in any search for wisdom. In doing this, he takes a giant leap forward, surpassing a majority of postmodern thinkers who are content with

opinion and not knowledge. Philosophy and theology can make progress only when they acknowledge the reality of the real. I look forward to reading the final volume of this realistic and methodological prolegomenon to a scientific theology.

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***Beyond Therapy: Biotechnology and the Pursuit of Happiness*, by the President's Council on Bioethics. New York: Regan Books, 2003. 400 pp. Bibliography. Index.**

[A] flourishing human life is not a life lived with an ageless body or an untroubled soul, but rather a life lived in rhythm with time, mindful of time's limits, appreciative of each season and filled first of all with those intimate human relations that are ours only because we are born, age, replace ourselves, decline, and die—and know it. It is a life of aspiration, made possible by and born of experienced lack, of the disproportion between the transcendent longings of the soul and the limited capacities of our bodies and minds....
[from the concluding chapter]

Beyond Therapy is the second of five reports that have been produced by the President's Council on Bioethics, which was established by George W. Bush in November 2001, to "advise the President on bioethical issues that may emerge as a consequence of advances in biomedical science and technology." The council is chaired by Leon Kass, M.D., professor of social thought at the University of Chicago.

At the time that *Beyond Therapy* was published, the council had sixteen (now it has seventeen) other distinguished members, including professors of law, professors of government or politics, philosophers, scientists,

and a syndicated columnist. In February 2004, two council members, a scientist and a philosopher, were dismissed, and replaced by three persons who have more conservative views. This caused a stir in the scientific community, and Kass was accused of attempting to stack the council with members sympathetic to Bush administration policies. In July 2004, the Union of Concerned Scientists issued a report critical of the dismissal and, around this time, editors of several scientific journals wrote editorials critical of Kass and the council.

Given this context, one might ask: Is *Beyond Therapy* biased in favor of a conservative view? The answer is a clear no. Kass has stated that he values the "diversity of opinions" expressed during council deliberations. The measured, balanced views presented in *Beyond Therapy* show that this philosophy has carried over to the printed word as well. The tone of the book is thoughtful, contemplative. If there is a bias—if there is a common theme—it is that we humans are deeply social creatures.

The book is divided into six chapters. The first gives an introduction, the second is concerned with our current and possible future attempts to improve our children, the third discusses performance-enhancing drugs and technologies, the fourth addresses aging research and its implications, and the fifth deals with mood-brightening and memory-altering drugs. The sixth and final chapter gives some concluding reflections on all these topics.

In the introduction, the members of the council describe how their inquiry into the scientific, technological, and ethical issues under discussion is organized. The inquiry, they write, is structured around a consideration of the *desires* and *goals* that drive human beings to pursue various enhancing technologies that go "beyond therapy." The council stresses that its purpose is not to make broad conclusions or predict the future, but simply to raise questions on issues of grave concern to society in order to stimulate public debate.

Chapter Two, titled "Better Children," brings up a whole set of topics related to procreation and children. Among these are ge-

netic technologies related to screening, selecting and engineering human embryos; pre-natal and pre-implantation-embryo screening for sex selection; and controlling children's behavior by use of psychotropic drugs such as the stimulant Ritalin and, increasingly, the class of antidepressants known as selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) that includes Prozac, Paxil, and Zoloft.

This last topic has been very much in the news lately, with reports that SSRIs are associated with an increased risk of suicide in children. The council provides some startling statistics about Ritalin, such as the fact that up to four million American children now take Ritalin daily for attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and that ADHD frequently is misdiagnosed. It also raises concerns about, for example, how the "medicalization" of children might affect their sense of right and wrong, and whether or not they learn to take responsibility for their actions. Indeed, the council surmises, "the beneficiaries of drug-induced good conduct may not really be learning self-control; they may be learning to think it is not necessary." Moreover, in the social arena, our pharmacological attempts to make children conform to conventional standards of behavior might reduce our acceptance of different personalities and temperaments.

In the next chapter, titled "Superior Performance," the council looks in depth at examples of the use of performance-enhancing drugs and genetic enhancements in sports. The focus on sports is deliberate; the hope is that what is elucidated in this particular case can be applied to human activity more generally. This topic seems particularly relevant now, in the wake of the Summer Olympic Games held in Athens, Greece, because a number of American and other athletes tested positive for performance-enhancing drugs, and consequently were disqualified from competition.

The council discusses how pharmacological and genetic enhancements affect the dignity of our human activity and the good of society. At this juncture, the council reveals its humanistic side. What matters most as we

go about our human activities, it emphasizes, is that “we do our work and treat our fellow workers in ways that honor all of us as agents and makers, demanding our own best possible performance, to be sure, but our best performance as human beings, not animals or machines.”

The subject of Chapter Four, “Ageless Bodies,” is human aging. Among the topics discussed are how scientific developments that might lead to age-retardation, extension of lifespan, and modification of the stages of the human life cycle will affect us as individuals and as a society. The report brings up a number of concerns about how anti-aging technologies might affect us. Among these is that an extension of lifespan that leaves a person longer in old age might interfere with society’s ability to innovate, change, and renew itself. Speaking to the issue of how senescence affects our outlook on life, the report wisely notes that “after a while, no matter how healthy we are, no matter how well placed we are socially, most of us cease to look upon the world with fresh eyes.” The struggles, disappointments, and demands of life can take their toll, resulting in “diminished ambition, insensitivity, fatigue, and cynicism”—hardly traits one would hope to find in the leaders of society. In addition, age retardation and extension of lifespan could leave us “unhinged from the life cycle,” and unable to “make sense of what time, age, and change should mean to us.”

The most powerful chapter of the book is arguably Chapter Five, “Happy Souls,” which focuses on the use of psychotropic agents to either brighten mood (SSRIs) or alter memories (beta-blockers such as propranolol) in adults. First, on the topic of mood-brightening drugs, the report questions whether feeling better through drugs and achieving true happiness are the same thing: is a newfound, drug-induced happiness fully one’s own, and is it real? Further, will not “pharmacological relief” from painful experiences (for example, the loss of a loved one) reduce one’s capacity to express the appropriate human response (sorrow)? For, the council observes, “nothing hurts only if noth-

ing matters ... [W]hile we rightly seek to reduce the causes of gratuitous suffering ... we do not want to remove the *capacity* to suffer when suffering is called for.”

The concern about the capacity of individuals to respond appropriately extends to society as a whole. For if society is filled with citizens who can obtain drug-induced “tranquility on demand” by dulling painful experiences, “who will judge wisely, who will act honorably, [and] who will rise to the occasion ...?” Next, turning to the topic of memory-erasing drugs, the council asks: Are not memories, even painful ones, part of who we are as individuals? Can we remove the memory without removing the truth of the experience that generated it? And do we not have a societal obligation to retain memories of past—and sometimes painful—historical events such as the holocaust? “Without truthful memory,” the report states, “we could not hold others or ourselves to account for what we do and who we are.” As a result, there could be neither justice nor forgiveness—“all would simply be *forgotten*.”

Beyond Therapy presents a philosophical and thought-provoking discussion of issues related to current and future technologies that might go beyond the realm of therapy into enhancement. If there is one small criticism of the book, it is that the discussions often contain several back-and-forth arguments from both sides of the issue; the effect of reading these discussions is somewhat like watching a tennis match, and the exercise can be tiring. In all likelihood, this is a by-product of the monumental task the council and its staff had of representing, as completely as possible, the views of all the council members. It may reflect chairman Kass’s insistence on expression of the “diversity of opinions” that were present. The purpose of the book is, after all, to prompt us to think about these important issues related to biotechnology. It succeeds well in this regard.

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